

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

English UNIVERSITIES

OCCASION'D BY

Dr. DAVIES'S Account

OF THE

General EDUCATION in them.



L O N D O N :

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COSSERVATORES

PRESENT

UNIVERSITY





TO HIS GRACE
The DUKE of NEWCASTLE,
CHANCELLOR
OF THE
Univerfity of Cambridge,

These fhort Observations on the nature and advantages of *Education* in our Englifh Univerfities, which His GRACE fo generously protects and encourages, are moft humbly and gratefully infcribed by

The AUTHOR.

THE NEWCASTLE

TO HIS GRACE

THE DUC DE NEWCASTLE

CHANCELLOR

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

These three Observations on the
use and advantage of Learning
in our English Universities, which
His Grace is graciously pleased
to have ordered, are now in press
and graciously intended by

THE AUTHOR



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English UNIVERSITIES.

S some respectable writers seem to have gone a little out of their way, in order to give advice for the better regulation and improvement of our universities; the least return that can be made them, is

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is to acknowledge this their good intention, and testify our approbation of all such instances of publick spirit; tho' at the same time we have reason to lament, that neither the publick, nor these learned bodies, are like to receive much benefit by their assistance.—To form a prospect of success from any attempt toward rectifying a disordered constitution, one is apt to presume upon some general acquaintance with the animal œconomy in those who are *practising upon* it, (General State of Education, p. 3.) as well as a competent share of knowledge both of the nature, and the cause of those particular disorders they propose to cure. But if thus much is expected in the present case, I doubt we shall be disappointed. The learned Doctor in particular, whose performance more immediately occasioned these observations, touch'd with a tender commiseration of the deplorable

able *abuse* which lies at the bottom of our constitution (p. 5.) has very *seriously* undertaken, what he deems *a most difficult* task, to search out and apply proper remedies: and since the chief *complaint* lies against those places that are *legally assigned for the physician's education* (ibid.) he freely points out their defects; and offers his opinion to the legislature, about ways and means of providing some relief in that respect. As I am far from being disposed to cavil about words, I shall not stop here to enquire how that can properly be termed an *abuse* in any thing, which adheres to its very frame and structure, nor is to be mended otherwise than by new modelling: I proceed then with him to the discovery of that gross *monkish superstition*, in which our two universities were originally founded (p. 5.) that universal rust spread over the institutions of both ancient and modern times (p. 16.) which

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which has clogg'd *every wheel of science*, (p. 34.) and which he apprehends would find work enough for *no less than fifty able professors in each* of them, (ibid.) to rub it off, and refine them to a tolerable degree of purity and perfection. He therefore seems to despair of accelerating any of their motions, or imparting a fresh vigour to them by any new supplies of strength: and prescribes only *alteratives*. He is not for adding to their funds, or enlarging the *fountains* of science (which he thinks are already superabundant); but rather wishes to change their destination, and finds nothing so much wanted, as a *power to give their waters a new direction, and divert them into different channels*, (p. 9.)

But it is not my purpose to follow this ingenious author thro' all his plan of operation; nor should I probably have been tempted to transcribe

scribe any part of it, even tho' he had not expressly entered his caveat against taking any such liberties with it, and in so very solemn a manner *desired the protection of government to secure his property therein* *. Instead then of examining minutely into the many proposals relative to the universities, I shall rather confine myself to the more agreeable part of shewing how small occasion there is for most of them; by giving a brief, but fair and true state of the fact as it now stands there, and as, I trust, it will appear to every impartial and more accurate observer. And since this writer's favourite scheme, which makes the principal figure in his work, (as something of the same

* See the author's ADMONITION; where he farther *hopes, that no person will presume to print any part or extract of this letter, or of the following work, in our own, or any FOREIGN language, without the author's consent.*

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kind did in the late *Estimates*) is the repeated project of multiplying *professors*; notwithstanding it will soon appear, even on his own supposition, that they can prove of use no otherwise, than by ceasing to be such: I must bestow a few reflections on the state of our universities in that view, which may serve perhaps to give the reader a sufficient *taste of the whole*. Now tho' this large institution of *professors* may be the chief, or only method of education in most foreign universities; yet it is rendered the less necessary in ours, by that most excellent provision of college *tutors*; where, by a course of instruction in the catechetical way, with constant examinations, every part and degree of science is in the best manner adapted to the several capacities of students, and their respective progress in it most effectually discovered: where the same subject may be set in different

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rent lights; and either varied, or repeated, or enlarged on as occasion shall require: Where the first openings of the human mind are closely attended to, and the first elements or seeds of knowledge instilled into it, and afterwards drawn out again and developed: Where youth are gently led from sounds to sense; their notions formed, and their attentions fixed, and both gradually introduced into the more complex relations and abstruse connections of things: Where they are taught more especially to think for themselves, and guarded against sophistry, and prejudice, and every source of imposition; and at length become duly qualified to reason justly, and reflect with sobriety on all such points as lie within their sphere, and may prove of the most importance to them.

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This is the peculiar excellence of these more private institutes; by which we have really all the benefits of a domestick education, without its inconveniencies, and which has thereby superseded several professorships. For it should be observed, that this is by no means true of them all; since those of the royal foundations in *Divinity, Civil Law, and Physick*, are very notoriously of the same use now as ever; they who at this day worthily fill those chairs, presiding in the publick exercises of their several faculties with no less credit to themselves, and benefit to others, than was done by the generality of their predecessors *. In some other parts of
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* The author is pleased to express his disapprobation of these *exercises* (tho' it must be here, and here only, that the professor appears
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learning indeed, a set lecture read by the professor, is not found to be quite so expedient; since a whole system of that sort, were it never so desirable, is to be met with now-a-days in a variety of books well known, or which may be easily pointed out and perused at leisure to much more satisfaction, together with all the requisite subsidiary helps; and by that means a more distinct idea of them formed, and a more perfect knowledge gained in pri-

in proper *dignity*) as the most *exceptionable part of university education*, (p. 12.) thro' their dangerous tendency to make people *disputacious*; but he might soon get eas'd of that apprehension, by being present at a few of them; and would perhaps find it hard to prove, that these tend naturally toward *raising debates in common life*, (ib.) and making every scholar a *polemic pedant*, (ib.) or to shew how they must in a more particular manner *disqualify* such from being good and useful *divines* in any other part of the world.

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vate and deliberate reviews, than could be derived from any one cursory repetition to a promiscuous audience. Nor consequently, would such formal lectures now be so well relished and resorted to (if resorted to at all, above once or twice for the novelty) as they have been in times past, when all other helps were wanting: unless where the professor exercises the tutorial office abovementioned, in giving what is called a more private course of lectures to a select number of pupils, (a common case, which seems to have missed this author, p. 14.) in which capacity some of the late mathematical and law professors in *Cambridge* were, as he observes, very much distinguished. And this any other professor is in like manner at liberty to undertake of himself, and thereby in effect thus far to commence a tutor, as many others have done, and do daily. But one must be very little acquainted with the
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the general nature of mankind, or the genius of those places in particular, who imagines that such can with the same ease and advantage interfere in the management of another person's pupils, or unite these two different offices together in the manner that has been proposed by some of our late projectors. Such is the natural modesty, such the peculiar delicacy of learned men, who have spent much time and pains in their profession, and are fully apprised of all the difficulties which attend it; that it must be no easy matter to engage some of these to interrogate and overrule the rest, who are properly on an equal footing with them, and all independent on each other. Were this thought ever so pertinent and practicable, the one party must be endowed with an uncommon share of courage, as well as skill and penetration, to attempt it; the other with no less a degree

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degree of deference and self-resignation, to submit patiently to be thus controlled and pædagogued, by such as may appear to have neither sufficient credit nor authority to give them any effectual directions: nor are perhaps more conversant in any of these subjects than themselves.

Wherever any thing of this kind becomes really necessary, either as to the original appointment of proper persons to the tutor's office, or any occasional inspection into their behaviour in it, we have reason to believe that all due attention is given to it by those, with whom, according to the present constitution of the place, such powers are intrusted; so that in this respect there seems to be no great occasion for the proposed alterations.

And the less still, as, in justice to a very valuable part of the universities,
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it must be owned, that at any one time, since the reformation, there never were more able *tutors*, nor more properly and worthily employed, than at present. Never, I believe, were more pains taken in the diligent instruction of the youth committed to them; never was a larger portion of true useful science taught, nor in so good a method; many not contenting themselves with reading and explaining some of the best authors on each subject, but likewise drawing up particular plans of their own, of which they have found the benefit by long experience; where not only the chief heads of every science are duly ranged in order, and included under general propositions; but the particulars also comprehended under them (many of which may have been more amply discussed by others, than they have room for) are distinctly pointed out,

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and the several authors carefully referred to, where they may be examined more at large, and the study of them carried on still more completely in private. This has been evidently the case of late in most, if not all the chief branches of philosophy, both *natural* and *moral*, and the success has answered in proportion. And tho' with respect to the former of these, which is of so extensive a nature, and where so many instruments and experiments are requisite, that a suitable *apparatus* might seem above the purse of most private fellows of colleges, there must be very considerable difficulties; yet are these in a good measure conquered, and a great advance has been made in it; in truth much greater, than could well be expected from the small pittance commonly allowed to tutors; which here, quite contrary to the usual practice in most other

other parts or professions of the kingdom, is pretty strictly confined to the ancient stipends; and these, alas! must needs be a slender recompence for all the time and labour spent, and the tedious confinement undergone in an ungracious office, by which they are often debarred from all other opportunities of bettering their condition; beside the frequent hazards they run of impairing it, by the backwardness of others in discharging those bills, which for the sole benefit of the pupils, and of their parents, they have consented to take upon themselves. Nor would the state of particular colleges be improved, any more than the circumstances of such persons themselves, if at the end of *ten years* painful service, they were obliged to turn out, as this author has proposed, p. 31.

This article of *tuition* is, as a noted
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author observed long ago, a hard case ;
and the continued disregard of it not
a little discouraging. “ The price in-
“ deed, which is thought a sufficient
“ reward, for any advantages a youth
“ can receive from a man of learning,
“ is an abominable consideration ; the
“ enlarging which would not only in-
“ crease the care of tutors, but would
“ be a very great encouragement, to
“ such as designed to take this pro-
“ vince upon them, to furnish them-
“ selves with a more general and ex-
“ tensive knowledge. As the case
“ now stands, those of the first qua-
“ lity pay their tutors but little above
“ half so much as they do their footmen :
“ What morality, what history, what
“ taste of the modern languages ; what,
“ lastly, that can make a man hap-
“ py, or great, may not be expected
“ in return for such an immense trea-
“ sure ! ’Tis monstrous indeed, that the
“ men

“men of the best estates and families
“are more solicitous about the tute-
“lage of a favourite dog or horse, than
“of their heirs male.”*

As to the other part of philosophy, which this judicious writer mentions in the first place, *morals*; (and which our author justly terms the *true foundation of all mental accomplishments*, p. 22.) they are here likewise treated of in a way no less useful, than entertaining. Instead of confining this study to the ancient dry, jejune abstracts, cramp'd in a little compend, or consisting in some insignificant collection

* *Guardian*, Vol. 2. No. 94.

N. B. The charge of tuition was rais'd in the university of *Cambridge*, A. D. 1721. to 24l. per ann. for noblemen, 12l. for fellow commoners, 6l. for pensioners, and 3l. for sizar; where it has stood ever since.

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of cases, which were often solved on very wrong principles, or without any principle at all; while the whole science was supposed to lie out of the road of argument; to be all fixed originally, and implanted in the mind by nature; or as a certain writer expresses it, *men went to the school of morality to be taught how much they could know without teaching*: instead of this doctrine, (which may perhaps prevail still in some places; but I speak of that only, with which I have the happiness of being more intimately acquainted;) we have here, along with an history of the growth, operations, and improvements of the human mind, the original, extent, and true grounds of morality investigated freely and thoroughly, and all the laws of nature fairly settled and deduced from thence in their due order; with an explanation of the different terms

terms in various authors; which used to occasion most of the difficulty and confusion in this interesting subject: whereby the whole is soon put upon a rational footing, and each branch of it proved with the utmost perspicuity, and with no less ease applyed to all common cases and occasions. Neither is this part of knowledge such, (to say the least of it) as a wise man need be ashamed of producing afterwards in the most publick scenes of life. For though, comparatively speaking, it often happens to be in no great repute, probably from some of the causes abovementioned, yet when mixed and incorporated (as it commonly now is) with *jurisprudence* and the *law of nations*, it will contain as many curious disquisitions, and such as become equally necessary to be well discussed by persons of all ranks amongst us, as perhaps any other branch of study whatsoever. It directs us to the fundamental

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damental rules, and determines the several rights of society in general, discovers the just grounds of our obedience to civil government, and prescribes the bounds both of civil and religious liberty. It not only acquaints us with the various outward forms of government established thro' the world, but lets us into the real character and interior constitution of them, and shews us in particular, what reason we have to esteem our own. I may add, that the want of this part of academical erudition in our nation, so frequently complained of by foreigners (who often shew themselves as sensible of the advantage of an English education in several other respects, as they are desirous to partake of it;) and which some able men amongst us have of late endeavoured to supply, makes the thing more worthy our attention, and recommends it to the care of those particularly, who are in-
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trusted with young persons of condition; and seems the last thing needful to render these our celebrated seats of literature as universally esteemed and frequented, as they well deserve: an endeavour to effect which should in itself be somewhat more commendable, than to depretiate or deprive us of our own peculiar excellence, by reducing us to the state of foreign seminaries; where all the real benefit to be reaped by the generality of our young gentlemen, bears no proportion (even in the judgment of the most sagacious foreigners themselves) to that which is attainable at home; the resort to which therefore by such numbers of our countrymen, would never be so great, did not that universally adored phantom, *fashion*, lead the way thither, to the no small detriment of the publick; and that in more respects than one; tho' probably the worst of them are but seldom heard of by their friends here: in which last article I have the happi-

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ness of our author's hearty consent with me, p. 7, 8.

Nor are we quite *unfurnished with means and opportunities for passing through the study of physick*, as the same author objects, p. 5. since we had, not long ago, a course of admirable lectures read here on the *Materia Medica*, by a gentleman, whose solid learning and superior skill in his profession, the author himself, I believe, will readily acknowledge; and still have the subordinate sciences of *anatomy, chemistry*, (the present professor of which hath also greatly distinguished himself by his lectures, which are said to be superior to every thing of that kind read before in England) and *botany*, taught occasionally by very able masters; and a publick *hospital* about to be opened, on the same extensive plan with those in London; as also frequent mention made of purchasing and endowing a *physick garden*; together

gether with a general disposition to promote in all respects whatever may be most beneficial to the faculty. So far are we from *suffering these two rivers of knowledge to creep on in the same lazy channel, which was marked out for them in the days of gothick ignorance and superstition*, p. 9.

It might yet farther be observed, that beside this general knowledge of philosophy, and cultivation of each other art, with a competent enquiry into the grounds of all *religion*, during the four first years of our students in the universities; at the expiration of it, the greatest care possible is taken to examine strictly into the progress they have made, and to distinguish it precisely by an impartial distribution of various *honours* at their admission to their first degree, on which their characters and fortunes here, (I speak always chiefly with re-

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gard to that university, which I have the best opportunity of knowing) and their whole fate in life do greatly depend.

We have likewise, with the *languages* ancient and modern, every branch of *classical* learning, or what is called humanity and polite literature, carrying on all the while in both of them; and the completing our education by connecting these together, has been of late encouraged more particularly in one, by certain *præmiums* wisely instituted for that purpose; which ever have been found the most effectual spur to industry and emulation, and which are very happily imitated in some colleges. In the other, almost an entirely new part of academic education, nor of less use and ornament perhaps than the rest, has been as happily introduced by an ample endowment for the study of the *common law*
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of our country; which may in time be attended with the like success.

As to the *expences* of an university education, which have of late been heavily complained of, and it is to be feared with too much reason; we have this to observe, that most kinds of college, or university expence properly so called, or the disbursements that immediately and unavoidably attend the situation of young persons there, have really been almost the same for near a century in all the principal articles; setting aside that of tuition abovementioned, with the gradual increase of the price of provisions, and a few others, incidental to those alterations made in their habitation, dress, or diet; which they make in a great measure of themselves, and which are not so easily prevented by others, as some may imagine: and therefore, if on the whole such persons spend a good deal more now-a-days, than they did formerly,

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merly, (as in all probability they do) it must be owing, not so much to what they find there, as to what they bring along with them; the fashionable taste that they acquired, and the expensive ways that they were used to, before their admission into the university, and which they are allowed freely to indulge during their recess from thence; and is therefore absolutely impossible to be entirely corrected when they continue there. The great law of *fashion*, which rules all the world, will have its influence there too in some degree; and the effects of luxury and high taste introduce themselves, and become prevalent, as they have done in other parts of the nation, tho' there perhaps the last. But it is some comfort, that they come unattended with that train of dissoluteness, and gross violation of decency and sobriety, which have been heretofore notorious.

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This same author allows, that our universities preserve an *advantage over any foreign seminary of learning, by their collegiate discipline; the regular calls to chapel, and to publick meals; the gates shut at stated hours; officers appointed, whose duty it is to inspect the publick morals of the youth*, p. 7. but soon gives this up again, in saying that those foreign seminaries are able to do full as well without it, by means of their *professors, who occupy all the time of their youth, and secure them from idleness*, p. 10. though how these same professors are sure of filling up their students time, so as to supersede the necessity of such collegiate *discipline*, better than our tutors can do with it; or how better care is like to be taken of young scholars, when they are at perfect liberty to study or not, and live at large all over the town, (as they do generally abroad) than where they are restrained within their
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own college walls, and immediately under the eye of their governours and tutors, is somewhat hard to comprehend. Neither is it much to be wondered at, if persons, who from their infancy have been habituated to a soft and delicate way of living, cannot be reduced to the ancient rigour and austerity of academic life; which many wish, that we were able to preserve in all its primitive simplicity, separate from its ignorance. But this, considering the general state of the world, and the common frailty of mankind, is rather to be wished, than reasonably hoped for; though in fact a good deal has been done that way by some late *regulations*; wherein all of this nature that was judged practicable, was very properly attempted, and which there has been not a little pains taken to inforce since; and it is somewhat remarkable, that these and the other instances of reformation have been carrying on in
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one or other of the universities, with all the zeal and vigour that the tempers of men, and the state and circumstances of things would admit, at the very same time that such an outcry is set up against them.

To conclude; if after all, some few things really want farther reformation in our universities, as it is very probable there may; more especially in some of their old *forms* and *statutes*; which by mere length of time must of course become obsolete; we are no less ready to concur again with this worthy author, in submitting it with all due deference to those in authority, who are ever watchful over the welfare of these sacred seats of literature, whether a *royal visitation* be not the only adequate remedy. But till such a thing shall be found seasonable, these learned bodies should, I humbly apprehend, be suffered to con-

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tinue quietly making the best of their present situation: and while they do continue thus far to answer the good ends of their original institution, as well as to conform themselves in some respects to the state of all those real improvements that are growing up around them; they will, they must, ever be of so much use and benefit to the publick, as to appear by no means unworthy of its favour and protection.

F I N I S.



